

ENGAGEMENT: A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE 1990s

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Forty five years ago, George Kennan walked these same halls. In the years since his professorship at the National War College, Kennan's theory of containment has guided American foreign policy through the turbulence of the Cold War--a long struggle that in all appearance ends with America the victor. The Cold War is now history; containment (as it pertains to preventing the spread of Communist ideology) served us well, but it too has quietly slipped into retirement. Amid the groundswell of debate over a "new world order," defense expenditures and America's role in the post-Cold War world, we should, perhaps, turn back the clock and look at George Kennan's year at Fort McNair.

Kennan and his contemporaries faced a similar set of circumstances as do the architects of American national strategy today. The United States, victor in World War II, was faced with the dilemma of how to shape a national strategy for the future. Kennan's forum for debate was the National War College, an institution that was "intended as the senior establishment for inservice training in the problems of national policy, military and political."(1: 306) His charter was not limited to classroom instruction,

as he understood his mission to have a much broader scope. Kennan and his contemporaries (notably Hardy Dillard, Sherman Kent and Bernard Brodie) felt that they could "contribute in a way that no previous institution could do to the thinking about problems of national policy that was going on all over Washington in that winter of transition and uncertainty." (1: 306)

Kennan's legacy was in defining a post-World War II national strategy for the United States. He examined American interests in the post-war world and saw conflict with the Soviet Union as the dominant threat to American interests. Containment, the national strategy to arise from his thinking, is best defined in his own words from the famous "X-Article":

In the light of the above, it will be clearly seen that the Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence. (1-359)

Even though Kennan himself disclaimed responsibility for containment as it was applied in later years, American national strategy was, nonetheless, influenced for the next 45 years by his thinking.

The United States faces a similar dilemma today, as victor of the Cold War, trying to address its leadership challenge in world affairs. With the breakup of the Soviet

Union, the world has changed, calling for a new national strategy upon which the US can focus its economic, political and military thinking. This essay proposes a post-Cold War national strategy of engagement to replace containment as a framework for national strategic thinking.

ENGAGEMENT DEFINED

Engagement is a national strategy of global involvement. It recognizes the need to define American national interests but also acknowledges the existence of national interests on the part of other countries and recognizes the potential for enhancing both sets of interests simultaneously. In this regard, engagement argues that American national strategy must now be interest-based rather than based primarily on balance of power. Engagement sees the existence of a political evolution with two fundamental characteristics: a gradual yet definite move toward regional and world security systems and the continued presence of dangers and threats to peaceful resolution of conflict. The key task for American strategy is to sustain and build upon the positive effects of regional economic and political development, while maintaining an effective military force to respond to both traditional and non-traditional threats.

The containment strategy of the last 45 years effectively countered the spread of world Communism, but it produced many foreign policy mistakes by failing to recognize considerations other than balance-of-power. In an effort to balance regional power to contain Soviet expansion, containment sought to provide solutions--power balance was an end in itself. America's changing leadership position in the post-Cold War era demands that it consider the interests of other nations; engagement argues for an ongoing process of resolution. This process also will provide a framework for success in the attainment of other national interests, such as improved human rights conditions. Finally, recognizing a myriad of potential conflicts into which the United States might be drawn, American national strategy must provide the foundation for a capabilities-based national military strategy and a force structure capable of projecting power to control the scope of conflict.

One's projection for the future is heavily dependent on their view of the past and the present. Any discussion of future national strategy must necessarily have as its foundation a clear view of the world in its current condition. What is proposed as a "new world order" in 1992 must be analyzed in an evolutionary context: the stage in the world's political development must be identified and

used as a point of departure to assess continuity and change.

POLITICAL EVOLUTION

Consider national security on an historical continuum. At one end, we find Thucydides addressing the causes of war and the interaction of nation-states. While his words still carry great meaning, the affairs of Corcyra and Corinth have largely escaped all but the well intentioned researcher. On the other hand, imagine the most futuristic example of the interplay among nations--the Federation of Planets--which for those of us raised as Trekkies, represents the same interaction among peoples of far off galaxies as that which we now experience in real-life conflict here on earth. Does the world of Sparta and Athens bear any similarity to that championed in our imaginations by James T. Kirk?

Perhaps it does, if one focuses on planet Earth as a point of reference in both examples. In the case of Athens and Sparta, the Peloponnesian Wars represented a long, bloody conflict between two coalitions. But looking back with a 2400 year hindsight, one wonders what all the fighting was about; after all, most of the warring factions now comprise what is modern Greece--a single entity that through history has either absorbed or accepted differing ethnic or geographically separate entities. Thus, the

political evolutionary process--through economic, social and political interaction--has produced political unity where numerous factions have previously existed.

Now think, for a moment, of the image of planet Earth as depicted on Star Trek--a single entity whose sons and daughters, having long dismissed their parochial differences, form the crew of a combat vessel of power projection into the vast expanse of space. The power politics of planet Earth that we address today must seem as remote to them as do the affairs of Thucydides to us.

Greece of 431 B.C. represents a microcosm of the world today. Similarly, national security affairs in a broad sense represent nothing more than the political evolution of mankind. This concept of political evolution adheres to the premise that democracies are less prone to fight wars among themselves. Peaceful coexistence is the historical outcome of long term commitment to common objectives. For example, Western Europe, the scene of almost continual military conflict for over 800 years, now boasts economic and political cooperation that in years past would not have been possible--not just military alliances, but genuine cooperation. Western Europe represents the latest step in the evolution of the political man. This evolution is based on the contention that, over time, people will migrate toward political systems that foster individual freedom,

provide for rule of law, ensure economic prosperity and respect ethnic and cultural differences.

The preceding argument focused on the positive aspects of political evolution and suggested optimism for the future. There is, however, an unavoidable reality to the entire spectrum of political endeavor: war and conflict have always existed as a part of the process. It has never been enough just to want peace, because someone has always been preparing for war. The aforementioned evolution is not predetermined: the well-being of mankind is ensured only if civilization survives. This essay suggests two fundamentals to continue the evolutionary process: on-going engagement to identify and diffuse the causes of conflict and an effective military force to respond when conflict is inevitable.

THE WORLD TODAY

If one is to build upon the concept of political evolution, one must first identify what stage the world is in its development. In one sense, the positive changes are astounding; as one historian wrote, "Roosevelt! Thou shouldst be living at this hour!"(8:23) In Latin America, every country except Cuba and Haiti has gravitated toward democracy. The Middle East witnessed the demise of the major destabilizing factor in the region; for the first time since Camp David, serious talks are underway between Arabs

and Israelis to reach understanding and possible solutions to key regional problems. The collapse of the Soviet Union means an end to the Cold War and permits the growth of democratic states in the former Soviet Union and in Eurasia. Western Europe, through the European Community, is being transformed into a single integrated market. Security patterns in Asia have changed to patterns of conflict resolution; the ASEAN states represent successful progress toward economic growth and political stability. Throughout the world, the evolution toward regional stability through security communities that focus on economic and political interdependence appears to be at its most advanced stage of development, at least in relative terms.

A key reason for optimism lies in the knowledge that world Communism, the greatest recent threat to world stability, is now bankrupt. Indeed, major, traditional "threats" to stability, particularly those that affect American national security, are hard to find. The breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War suggest to many an end to major conflict because the only traditional threat left is militant nationalism. While this nationalism continues to be a destabilizing force in places such as Yugoslavia, Ireland, Armenia and the West Bank, many here in the United States view the threat to American national security and national interests as minimal.

Nonetheless, while it may be difficult to pinpoint specific traditional military threats, the world remains a very dangerous place. The former Soviet Union still possesses some 30,000 nuclear weapons; the absence of accountability and control of these warheads could provide for a multitude of crises. Chemical and biological weapons remain a menace, and no clear mechanism now exists to monitor or control their manufacture and distribution. In Asia, Chinese and Indian aspirations have the potential for destabilizing the region. Moreover, other non-traditional threats represent potential dangers to world peace. These include drug traffic, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, Islamic fundamentalism, environmental concerns and water disputes. The "new world order" certainly can boast a "new world," though the question of "order" remains seriously in doubt. The plethora of potential dangers suggests that the world today is not a very safe place, despite the absence of clearly identifiable traditional threats. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the inevitable debate centers on America's role as a stabilizing factor amid all these potentials for conflict.

THE UNITED STATES: SUPERPOWER OR WORLD LEADER?

For many, the image of a declining Soviet Union leaves the world with only one superpower. On the other hand, a case can be made that "superpower" is a relative term;

absent a worthy competitor, the term is simply meaningless. To be sure, the US is the only nation that can project military power around the world on a scale such as Desert Storm, but the entire "superpower" connotation changes with the end of the Cold War, containment, and balance of power in a global sense.

In a world dominated by two superpowers, the nations of the world migrated to one of the two spheres of influence for two primary reasons: to maintain an umbrella of protection and to attain individual national interests. The former took the form of both a nuclear deterrent umbrella extended by the superpower and conventional arms buildup in the client state. The latter provided the client nation a certain degree of autonomy to pursue its own agenda, owing to a level of confidence in the protection offered by the superpower. As an example, Korea and Taiwan could not have embarked on their remarkable course of economic achievement in the absence of US protection. Similarly, Syria's active campaign of destabilizing the course of events in the Middle East was made possible by a close alignment with the Soviet Union. We see the theme repeated time and again in the Cold War period: the superpowers gain balance of power surrogates while the client states gain benefactors.

But the world has now changed; no longer are there two superpowers competing for influence. For the United States, there no longer exists any justification for expending

exorbitant amounts of money for competing against and deterring an ominous threat. For the client states, there is no longer a genuine threat of a large nuclear exchange between the superpowers and, therefore, no longer do the same reasons exist to migrate toward the protective umbrella of the United States. Moreover, given the economic condition of the United States, there is little economic and military benefit to association with a superpower--the US simply does not have the resources to donate to client states solely for balance of power considerations. As a result, our leverage with these nations has also diminished. The foundation of superpower status has eroded for the United States because there is no longer another superpower to counter. As a result, the United States cannot count on cooperation owing to its stature as a military and political power. America's success in the 1990s will be derived from the leadership role it plays in world and regional development.

As we enter the post-Cold War era, the United States is in the position of being the only power in the world who retains the credibility of the world community to hold such a leadership role. In the Middle East, the United States holds a position of trust. After US forces landed on Saudi soil for Desert Shield, King Fahd observed:

I trust the United States of America. I know that when you say you will be committed, you are, in fact, committed. I know that you will stay as

long as necessary to do what has to be done, and I know you will leave when you are asked to leave at the end, and that you have no ulterior motives.(6: 2)

In Southeast Asia, the US is accepted as an external guarantor of stability, providing a military presence to obviate the need for excessive military buildup by other actors in the region. According to Sheldon W. Simon, "Unlike Europe, the nations of the Pacific have never agreed on a common enemy. . . . In these circumstances, the United States has an important role to play as a generally acceptable force of stability."(7: 97) In Europe, the US continues to play the leading role in NATO, even as the military nature of that alliance declines. The emerging union of former Soviet states looks to the US for guidance and support as it attempts to enter a new era in its political evolution. The United States has traditionally been--and remains--a useful protector in regional rivalries and conflicts.

The United States maintains a dominant role in world affairs because of the respect for its leadership position. American post-Cold war strategy must capitalize on the positive events of this era and continue the process of positive engagement, leading the world community toward regional stability. Instead of looking for threats in a balance of power world, US national strategy should focus on

opportunities to continue accomodation and conflict resolution.

CONTAINMENT: AN OUTDATED STRATEGY

American national security strategy of containment focused on the Soviet threat. This concept is evident in the Middle East, where "the primary concern of the United States in the Middle East throughout the last 40 years has been the potential Soviet threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its southern neighbors, and hence to Western interests in the region."(3: 9) Indeed, American willingness to stand firm in Greece, Turkey, and Iran immediately after World War II kept Stalin from expanding his sphere of influence into that area as he did in Eastern Europe and Asia. Throughout the Cold War period, actions by both the United States and the Soviet Union reflected balance of power considerations, and a corresponding tendency to make significant political mistakes by failing to understand other equally important and explosive issues in the region.

But it is not enough just to say that containment has outlived its utility. It is also important to critique containment "errors", so as to explain why a threat-based national strategy has outlived its utility. A key point of departure in the current debate on American military strategy is the absence of "threats," suggesting that our

national strategy continues to use the identification of specific traditional threats as its foundation. By understanding why a threat-based national strategy led to mistakes, we can, perhaps, refocus the current debate and offer engagement as an alternative national strategy.

Several examples point out errors committed in a regional policy dominated by balance of power considerations. When the United States began to worry about Iran's trend toward neutrality (as a byproduct of Mossadeq's insistence on Iran's sovereign right to control its own resources), the Eisenhower administration supported the reinstallation of the Shah. (3: 14) While this move "stabilized" the balance of power in the near term, the move came back to haunt the United States years later. The American government failed to recognize significant changes in Iran's political environment which gave rise to an Islamic fundamentalist government; the transition showed how quickly fortunes could change in a balance of power world. Moreover, the move compromised the principle of sovereignty which previous administrations had considered an important foundation of international politics.

The Soviet Union, in an effort to balance US support of Israel, established close relations with Egypt, only to be expelled by Sadat for, among other things, their open contempt for the Egyptian military. Thus, because the dominant and often singular motivation was balance of power,

both the great powers have been largely blind to the internal events of the region. According to Bruce Kuniholm, US policy in the region evidences a continuing concern for the realities of great power diplomacy. In addition,

It also suggests that most postwar presidential administrations, because of their concern for geopolitical factors (and their responsiveness to domestic political pressures) have been unable either to understand or to respond constructively to the needs of the region's emerging nationalist and trans-national forces, many of whose aspirants have been thwarted by the apparent dictates of other American priorities.(3:20)

Kuniholm provides several suggestions to overcome this shortcoming. American presidents need more contact with the Middle East, and their advisers need to be better versed in the internal problems in the region. In essence, he suggests that the US be more involved, more engaged in the fundamental issues of the region and not allow third parties to do our interpretation of these issues for us.

Accommodation in the region will be the product of the recognition of mutual problems, addressed in a framework of mutual respect, with the US playing a leading role by remaining engaged in the area.

A fundamental weakness in containment is that it offered simple solutions to complex problems. By looking at the world through a balance of power monocular, the great powers saw power shifts as the key political issues of the last 45 years. While containment may have been successful in deterring the spread of communist ideology, it did little to

offer constructive progress in other issues vital to the political and economic development of client states. In many respects, the US was saddled with the trappings of colonialism, though "US officials saw the Soviet Union as a much greater threat to US interests than US association with the vestiges of colonialism." (3: 13)

Engagement suggests there is more to foreign policy in the 1990s than balancing the power of one state against another. In the future, powerful political and economic forces will impact developing nations in the process of modernization. To exert a positive influence in their economic and political development, the US must remain engaged in these countries. The US must anticipate the problems these countries are going to face in the growth process, because it will have to deal with these same problems in the future. Engagement allows the US to manage these forces in the developmental stage in a proactive manner, rather than dealing with their consequences after they have taken over the countries we had been supporting.

ENGAGEMENT AND AMERICA'S CHANGING LEADERSHIP ROLE

Fundamental to the concept of engagement is the notion that the process of conflict resolution is often more important than the result. In a balance of power world, the end result--the cultivation of balancing actors--dominated US thinking. Engagement argues, on the other hand, that the process of negotiation, economic interdependence and

alliance building will, in itself, produce positive progress.

A change in this direction may already be apparent. Notable progress toward a negotiated peace has been made in Angola and El Salvador. Positive results were made possible by the absence of superpower interference. Moreover, the United States played a key role not by directing preconceived outcomes, but by fostering opportunities for the principals to arrive at a settlement. In each case, the process yielded a settlement, but the United States did not dictate an outcome. The world is ready for this process of engagement, as evidenced by situations in other parts of the world.

The current Middle East peace talks have been the subject of endless speculation. While there is little guarantee of a negotiated settlement in the near term, the process of negotiation offers the brightest hope since Israel's independence. America's role in facilitating the talks and bringing the principal actors together certainly fits this newly designed national strategy: engagement provides the opportunity for accommodation. Further progress in turbulent areas such as Afghanistan will be achieved not by directing a solution, but by the United States providing a framework for negotiation. By remaining engaged in the region, the United States can facilitate the process of conflict resolution, though the United States will be unable

to dictate terms because of any superpower status.

Engagement argues that the regional actors themselves must be active in the conflict resolution process.

Engagement recognizes a fundamental shift in America's base of power away from predominantly military instruments.

In Bound to Lead, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., argues:

In the traditional view, military force is the dominant instrument of power. Although force remains the ultimate form of power in a self-help system, it has become more costly for modern great powers to use than in earlier centuries. Other instruments such as communications, organizational and institutional skills, and manipulation of interdependence have become important instruments of power. (2: 180)

In the 1990s, the United States will depend to a larger degree on "soft" power. Indeed, the nature of American leadership will have to evolve to match the changing international environment.

Any new national strategy will have to deal with a myriad of secondary issues that, while they may not be vital national interests like security, are nonetheless important national interests, such as trade policy, immigration, environmental issues and human rights. While it is not the intent of this essay to debate the place of these issues in overall national strategy, it is instructive to demonstrate how the national strategy of engagement would respond to these enduring concerns. The topic of human rights provides an excellent opportunity to compare containment with an engagement strategy, and thus, to support the overall thesis

that engagement should serve as the foundation for American national policy in the 1990s.

HUMAN RIGHTS

In a balance of power world, the US could demand concessions on human rights as a precondition to aid or support. Alternatively, the US could turn its head, if support for broader American interests were to be jeopardized by attention to human rights abuses. Nonetheless, the issue of human rights in the 1990s reflects the complexities the United States is likely to encounter in two fundamental areas: Western standards are not universally understood or accepted in the rest of the world, and other countries have their own competing interests which we must understand and resolve in order to address issues that are important to US interests. Human rights in the Middle East is an excellent forum to address each of these considerations.

In the first place, other people look at things differently. Indeed it becomes exceedingly complicated when one attempts to apply Western standards of behavior to human rights violations in a different culture. Amnesty International and the Committee on Foreign Relations both publish annual reports on human rights throughout the world. As seen through Western eyes, the arrest of political dissidents (and subsequent substandard treatment of political prisoners) can only be condemned. It would be

wrong, however, to suggest that Islam has developed a philosophy of human rights that is consistent with that of the Western world. The notion that man has certain inalienable rights or that he has freedoms that are his natural due is largely alien to Islam. Several factors account for this difference.

First, the idea of rights is more applicable to God than to man--Islam is predicated on the belief that all things are the property of Allah. Any rights that man may have accrued are limited and derived from Allah. Second, "man's existence is not the sufficient condition of his due, as it is in French revolutionary and Jeffersonian liberal thought." (5: 142) The relationship of man to Allah is one of complete submission; the rights of man are not universal, but depend on the degree to which man submits himself to Allah--thus man is not equal, and therefore does not enjoy equality in human rights. Third, the idea of submission carries into Islamic government. Islam combines church and state; rulers have as a duty to suppress disorder and injustice to ensure a positive climate for religious worship. Submission to Allah carries with it a submission to legal authority, therefore Islamic government does not necessarily give rise to a theory of civil rights for the protection of the individual. The point of this discussion, returning to the issue of national strategy, is that there is more than one way of looking at the issue of human

rights. In other parts of the world, there are fundamental differences in the ways peoples and governments look at issues such as individual liberty, political expression and human rights. If the US is to make a positive impact on human rights violations in regions such as the Middle East, it must first gain a clear understanding of how and why their views vary from our own. Continued engagement is a prerequisite to mutual understanding, which, in turn, is fundamental to the reconciliation of differences.

Additionally, other countries have their own problems; human rights may not be their primary concern. Syria, for example, is ruled by an authoritarian regime which does not hesitate to use force against its citizens when the government feels threatened. Thousands of actual or suspected opponents of the government have been or continue to be detained in the context of the state of emergency in force since 1963. The state of martial law is justified on the basis of the continued state of war with Israel and threats posed by terrorists. These threats are considered very real by a government ruled by the minority Alawi sect (not more than 10-12% of the population). Given the tenuous nature of any government whose foundation of support stems from such a small minority, one finds it easy to understand the speed and determination with which President Hafez al-Asad attempts to crush subversion. While not morally

acceptable, his actions are somewhat understandable given the nature of his perceived threat.

Similarly, Jordan has a track record of human rights abuses, with the arrest of political dissidents commonplace in the past. King Hussein likewise faces serious internal threats, notably the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Islamic Liberation Party. Martial law had been in effect until 1990, and the suspension of martial law has provided a moderating effect on the detention of political prisoners. Although the future is uncertain, one should assume that the Public Security Department continues to monitor the activities of potentially subversive organizations; future treatment of political dissidents will likewise reflect the perceived threat to the government.

Syria and Jordan, two countries whose human rights records are significantly different, demonstrate the trouble oversimplification brings to the issue of human rights (or any other national interest). Both countries have significant internal problems, not unlike those of other countries characterized by minority rule or civil strife. Indeed, it does little for the US to demand improvement in the human rights area without understanding the internal problems within these countries, even if improving human rights were high on their agenda.

The implication for national strategy is that the United States will not be able in the post-Cold War world to

dictate the resolution of issues such as human rights due to its superpower status. Engagement allows for better understanding of regional issues and problems and provides the best hope of gaining resolution.

MILITARY FORCE STRUCTURE

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that all our problems can now be solved with negotiation and understanding. As already pointed out, there are many potential threats awaiting the United States in the post-Cold War world. In addition, there appears to be a law of political physics that says a power will always emerge to fill a vacuum. World War I was the "war to end all wars," but Germany and Japan emerged and forced a Second World War. As the United States disarmed from this second major conflict, the Soviet Union arose as an ominous threat to Western security.

Now that the Cold War is over and the Soviet Union is left fragmented, the world is witness to another instance of a power vacuum. Engagement argues for continuing the move to foster regional stability; in doing so the United States can preempt another country or coalition from filling the power vacuum. Nonetheless, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that political, economic and diplomatic efforts will be completely successful in deterring would-be aggressors. The national strategy of engagement demands an

effective armed force ready to project power anywhere in the world. Engagement equates to involvement in the political process, but it does not suggest that disarmament is a near term possibility. Admittedly, traditional threats are hard to find right now, but they were also hard to pinpoint in 1920 and 1946.

The irony of the Cold War era is that while the United States budgeted for and trained against a Soviet threat, every conflict the US has fought has been against a non-traditional threat. Korea and Vietnam may well have been the by-product of containment, but neither was the kind of war the US envisioned in the planning or budgeting process. Smaller scale conflicts such as Lebanon and Panama were also undertaken against non-traditional threats in unlikely scenarios.

Similarly, the Gulf War served as the first example of a post-Cold War conflict. To America's good fortune, the conflict happened before the post-Cold War military drawdown, effectively allowing military planners to use a force sized for the Cold War in a post-Cold War conflict. There is little doubt that Western force structures will be significantly smaller in the years to come.

While many experts may have disagreed with the theory that the defense of the United States began at the Fulda Gap, one cannot overlook the premise that the force structure designed, built and trained to fight a traditional

Soviet threat served as the base force from which to take forces to fight non-traditional foes. Indeed this is the crucial dilemma facing senior military officials who recognize the need for a force drawdown but argue in favor of a credible base force.

Military planners may realize, on one hand, that the Soviet Union as a "threat" has gone away. On the other hand, they also know that it is not the Soviet threat that claimed nearly 120,000 American lives in the last 45 years. Moreover, they might argue, the absence of warning before each of the non-traditional conflicts in the past suggests that today we may well be incapable of predicting the next adversary--or anticipating the next war--with any degree of certainty. In the past, we have relied upon a Cold War size force structure to meet these unpredictable military challenges; scaled down force structures in the future may not allow for short notice commitment to a Korea, Vietnam or Desert Storm scenario. Rather than drawing down force structure solely on the basis of a now non-existent Soviet threat, perhaps a reminder of where and under what circumstances military force has been used since World War II would be a better determinant of adequate force levels in the future. The enemy "threat" may no longer be an accurate barometer for defining military force structure. If national "interest" drives national strategy, then the "capability" required to attain, maintain or work toward

those national interests should determine force size and composition.

Indeed, military planners are aggressively reviewing America's post-Cold War military strategy. In an upcoming Defense Guidance, national military strategy will be outlined.(9: 1) Significantly, US military strategy, anchored fundamentally on an assessment of the Soviet threat during the Cold War, now calls for a military structure based on a "capabilities" assessment to meet US national interests. To accomplish this goal, national military strategy rests on four distinct pillars: strategic deterrence and defense, response to crisis, forward presence and reconstitution. The national military strategy focuses on a regional orientation, recognizes the reality of a much smaller force, and takes into account the threat of the uncertain and unknown.

While a detailed analysis of the military strategy falls beyond the scope of this article, it is instructive to note that military planners are actively trying to define the role of America's military in achieving national interests. This in itself is not remarkable; the disconnect in the planning process is that they are doing so in the absence of a consensus on national strategy.

In the same way that military objectives in war are derived from political objectives, so should national strategy drive the development of national military strategy

In peacetime. Unfortunately, there is little consensus on a post-Cold War national strategy; the resulting debate over force structure, therefore, becomes an exercise in defining force levels in the absence of a clear definition of what objectives the military structure is designed to attain. The flaw in the current strategic debate lies in the tendency to apply Cold War national strategic thinking to the problem of assessing a post-Cold War military.

Chairman Les Aspin, for example, provided a white paper titled "An Approach to Sizing American Conventional Forces for the Post-Soviet Era." Detailed in nature, the white paper deals in a positive manner with the tough questions of how to size America's future military.(10: 1-2) But Mr. Aspin's analysis reflects a Cold War mindset that looks first to assess the size of the threat, then to build a force structure--this process is flawed in that it fails to define a national strategy as a fundamental prerequisite to developing a military strategy and subsequent force levels.

American national strategy for the 1990s should include an assessment of potential threats, but not be dominated by the debate over known threats. Rather, national military strategy should evolve from a consensus on American strategic interests and goals--and the challenges to these interests and goals. The size of the force structure would logically flow (although clearly not without debate) from an

assessment of how military forces should be used to attain those goals.

THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

After having won the Second World War, the United States underwent a rapid demobilization under the pretext that the major threats to its security had been defeated. In short order, however, America faced challenges in Greece, giving rise to the Truman Doctrine and the national strategy of containment. It soon became evident that the United States could not remain isolationist; a larger, potentially more menacing Soviet Union threatened peace and stability. As American strategy focused on the Communist threat, military preparedness was neglected, and the outbreak of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula found the United States woefully unprepared to respond to that emergency in a timely fashion.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United States again finds itself assessing its role in the international arena. The decade of the 1990s provides positive signs that within major regions of the world, the process of political evolution is progressing in a positive manner. While the United States may have won the Cold War, the world remains a very dangerous place. Nonetheless, containment and balance of power politics should give way to a process of engagement

whereby the United States encourages regional economic and political development and negotiated resolution of conflicts. In the process of remaining engaged, the United States will be better poised to deal with other key national interests such as human rights, nuclear proliferation and environmental issues. At the same time, a balanced base military force is required to respond to military crises as well as support the attainment of national interests as outlined in a coherent national strategy.

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